IMMORTAL FAME.

BY HOWARD FIELDING.

PART I.
THE SECLUSION OF BERTRAM DYER.

I knew Bertram Dyer when he was living on two boiled eggs in the morning, and an occasional invitation to dinner; but he was constitutionally incapable of becoming either poor in flesh or shabby in dress, and therefore few of his friends were aware how meager was the reward of his literary labors. It was a pleasure, in those days, to see him eat; and I enjoyed it as often as I could afford to do so. Now that his fame is so great, I can boast of having fed him; and, moreover, I can advance the claim that it was one of my dinners which started him on the road to fortune.

On the occasion in question I had asked Bertram to meet me at a tobacconist's on 42d street, near the hotel where we were to dine. Urged by appetite, he came too early; and I found him sitting on the pedestal of a wooden Indian in front of the shop. Aroused from deep meditation by the sound of my voice, he arose and faced the image.

"Old fellow," he said, but which of us he was addressing I do not know, "there's money in a story about Indians."

And forthwith he wrote one which has been the talk of three continents, if I count Australia. Though Dyer was under thirty and had never seen a live Indian, he was thought, in England, to be a general of our

I Found Him Sitting on the Pedestal of a Wooden Indian.

western army and the peculiar terror of the red man. A newspaper portrait of him, which appeared bald, through a defect in the plate, led to the rumor that he had been scalped, and thousands of people were thus induced to buy his book. The singularly lurid coloring of the 42d street Indian shines out in Dyer's description of war paint, and lends a horrid realism to the tale which has been marked by many, but fully appreciated, I believe, by no one except myself.

If there is one thing that is certainly worth money to a man in these days, it is advertising, and Dyer had an abundance. Offers from publishers came thick and fast in the wake of it, and my friend was well to do. Greatly to my sorrow, he married, and I saw less and less of him; for, though he urged me to come to his home, I went very seldom, having taken a violent dislike to Mrs. Dyer. Then he moved away from the city for reasons that seemed excellent when he presented them to me, though I selfishly urged him to remain, for I had become very much attached to him. It appeared that he was overwhelmed with literary engagements which he thought it would be easier for him to fulfill if he could have the quiet of the country. Also, he was entertaining many of his wife's relations, and they had begun to be a burden upon him, notwithstanding the comfortable size of his income.

He bought an abandoned farm in the wilds of the Berkshire hills, and made a habitable dwelling of the rude old farmhouse. We maintained a desultory correspondence as long, I fancy, as nature will have such things live; and then I knew no more of him, except by paragraphs in the papers, and by his published writings, which appeared in great and increasing profusion.

About two years after his withdrawal into seclusion I came to know his cousin, Miss Emily Dyer, a charming young woman, who had been thrown upon her own resources by the death of her parents, and was struggling to maintain herself in New York. She had secured a position as a "retoucher" in a photographer's establishment, and her leisure was given to drawing and painting. Her work was hard, her wages very small, and, to cap the climax of misfortune, the photographer had fallen in love with her. I would have rescued her from all these hardships and perils by the simple process of matrimony; but, unhappily, she did not care for me. Her affections were fixed upon a tall, towheaded youth who was studying art, but had not yet learned to draw a salary. Even by the light of their own roseate hopes it seemed likely that they might have to wait a year or two before the young man should become rich and famous; and, in the meantime, I thought that Bertram Dyer, as the nearest relative of the girl, ought to help her along.

I wrote to him upon the subject, and received a reply ten days later. It was a refusal, and he had dictated it to a stenographer! The thing read like a circular about foreign missions. I would have thought it a forgery, gotten up by his wife, but for the unmistakable Dyer signature. Such little, fine-lined, coldly regular characters! Why had I not long ago read his true nature in his parsimonious chirography. Yet I had thought him one of the most generous and tenderly sympathetic of men. Could success change a human creature so completely? I could not credit it, yet on the chance that it was true, I was moved to thank God that he had made me a failure.

After spending a day or two in an endeavor to digest Bertram's letter, I went to see Emily. We were just as good friends as if I had never given her the annoyance of refusing me. She was ill and could not receive me. Upon leaving the house where she was boarding, I perceived the flaxen-haired artist patrolling the other side of the street. A mutual sorrow often unites the bitterest enemies. I accosted my successful rival and offered him a cigar, which he received quite in the way of friendship.

"I don't believe it's anything serious," he said, in an anxious tone. "She is tired; that's all. If she could only go out into the country and rest for awhile——"

I quite agreed with his unspoken conclusion, but, though we walked together till after midnight and talked of nothing else, we did not succeed in reaching a solution of the difficulty.

The next day I set out on a pilgrimage to the Berkshire hills.

Bertram Dyer's retreat was situated in a peculiarly desolate region. The nearest railroad station was ten miles away, in the town of Rockwood. There I alighted one evening, and secured lodgings in a quaint little hotel kept by three old maids. That one of them who does the cooking should be earning $20,000 a year in New York, and wearing the "cordon bleu." Her hot biscuits appeal to all that is highest and noblest in a man's nature. He who begins the day with them can hardly descend to the level of an ignoble act before sunset—when he can have some more.

Being fortified for a task that promised many difficulties, I rode away from the hotel in Rockwood about 9 o'clock in the morning, mounted upon a bicycle which I had brought from New York. I had received careful directions regarding the road, which, indeed, was easy enough to follow, since there was no other. It was in excellent condition, and, despite the hills, I might have made the ten miles at good speed, but I stopped frequently to admire the scenery, which was always beautiful, and sometimes had the effect of grandeur. There were points in the road from which I could command a wide prospect, and once, at about six miles distance, I got a glimpse of Bertram's house. With the aid of strong field glasses I could see it quite distinctly, and it seemed a pleasant place in which to live and write.

I reached the border of my friend's estate before 11 o'clock. There was a gate giving entrance to an avenue that wound away toward the house, which was invisible from that point. A grove, bright with autumn tints, growing beside the main road tempted me to make the circuit of the grounds, and I entered them eventually on the side toward Greenville, a town in which I should have left the railroad, but for the reputation of the Rockwood inn, since Greenville is nearer New York and only about a mile further from Dyer's home.

On approaching the house I perceived Mrs. Elizabeth Graves—mother of Mrs. Dyer—standing on the steps that led up to the veranda. I had met her in New York, and I liked her even less than her unamiable daughter. Her surprise at the sight of me made me aware that my letter announcing my intended visit had not arrived. Indeed, I had given it an insufficient start, considering the irregularity of the mails in that region.

Mrs. Graves was not more cold in her welcome than I had expected her to be.

"You rode over from Greenville, I suppose," she said. "It's a pity you didn't come the other way, for if you had you'd have met Bertram. He drove over to Rockwood this afternoon."

"Indeed," said I. "What time did he start?"

"Between 9 and 10," she answered.

Of course, I knew perfectly well that Bertram had not been on the road to Rockwood at the time specified, but I am not one who would betray a man to his mother-in-law. If it suited my friend's convenience to leave a lie behind him at home, that was a matter with which his own conscience might deal. So I let it be understood that I had come from Greenville.

Mrs. Dyer came out of the house almost immediately. She was somewhat more cordial than her mother had been. The elder woman would have sent me away hungry, but the younger invited me to lunch, though with no great excess of hospitality. However, my mission was of a character to make one patient under any provocation. No poor relation in real life or in fiction was ever less particular than I about the flavor of the invitation. If there had been any possibility of finding out where Bertram had gone, I would have followed him, but since he had taken pains to lie about his destination, I thought it best to wait for him. His wife seemed doubtful when he would return, and she regretted that my time was so short, etc., etc. I had said nothing about being in a hurry; and when the words were thus put into my mouth I repudiated them.

"My business with him is very urgent," said I. "If he does not return in the course of the day, I shall make an effort to find him."

Mrs. Dyer looked at her mother as one who would say: "This is a very disagreeable person;" and the mother answered with her eyes: "I wish he were in Patagonia." Nevertheless, I remained for luncheon, and conversed as amicably as possible with the two ladies already mentioned, and also with two sisters of Mrs. Dyer, with her aunt, and with her grandfather on the maternal side. The table was set for two other persons, but they did not appear while I was present.

In the afternoon a sudden and violent rainstorm swept down from the western hills, and I blessed it, for not even the people with whom I was a guest dared turn me from their doors in such weather. I stayed to dinner, and when the mournful meal was done, Grandfather Graves went forth to view the lowering clouds and returned with an aspect as gloomy as their own. Then Mrs. Dyer asked me to remain over night, and I accepted the invitation with cheerful alacrity.

It was not much after 9 o'clock when I retired to my room. Midnight is my ordinary bedtime, and I felt no desire to sleep. I waited an hour or more till the house became quiet, and then stole forth to smoke on the veranda.

The moon was just breaking through the clouds and the night was full of beauty and wonderfully warm. For a long time I sat there, smoking and thinking of Emily Dyer. I had good hope that she would profit by my secret intercession with her cousin, and when that was over there might be something else that I could do for her. At least I could help the lanky boy whom she had honored by her preference to make a profitable use of such talent as he had.

Suddenly I was startled by something falling beside me. It was my cigar, which had slipped from my fingers. I had been asleep. The moon had sunk almost to the hills upon the west. It was nearly 3 o'clock.

I re-entered the house and softly closed and locked the door. At that moment I heard a noise from the other end of the hall. Some one was coming.

I hastily stepped into the unlighted sitting room. A slender, dark young man

I Hastily Stepped Into the Unlighted Sitting Room.

with disheveled hair passed close to my hiding place, but did not see me. He was carrying a lamp and yawning painfully. When he had gone upstairs and entered a bed room I stole up after him. The remainder of the night I passed in slumber.

When I came down the next morning I met Mrs. Graves in the hall.

"Bertram came back last night," she said. "Perhaps you heard him drive up to the front door, a little after twelve?"

"No, I hadn't heard him, nor had I seen him, though at the hour named I had been sitting almost directly before the door. However, I did not tell her that.

"Later in the night," she continued, "he was taken very sick. You won't be able to see him. We have sent to Greenville for a doctor."

I expressed my deepest sympathy.

About 9 o'clock the doctor from Greenville arrived. I recognized him as the young man with the tangled hair who had passed so near me on the preceding night.

PART II.
A FRIENDLY BURGLARY.

I considered it highly important to ascertain whether the young man who personated the Greenville doctor really had any knowledge of medicine. If he had it would seem probable that he was a resident physician attending upon Bertram in an illness that was by no means the sudden and unexpected attack described to me by Mrs. Graves. Accepting that view two theories would naturally suggest themselves to account for the duplicity and concealment that were being practiced by the household. Bertram's illness might be of such a nature that it would better be kept secret; he might be periodically insane. Second, he might be at the point of death, and his wife and her relations might fear that I would influence him against them in the disposition of the money he had earned and the valuable copyrights he held.

On the other hand, if the young man were not a doctor there must be some sort of plot against my friend, whereby he was held prisoner and prevented from communicating with the outer world. Perhaps his property was slowly being absorbed by the Graves contingent. I was prepared to suspect Mrs. Graves of anything. As for Mrs. Dyer, I could not regard her as an active element in so serious an affair. My dislike for her had been based upon her mental vacuity, upon her absurd inferiority to her husband. She had seemed to me incapable of good or evil except as others might influence her. Grandfather Graves was a shrewd old rat, with an eye like an X-ray to explore the inside of another's pocket. With the other members of the household I was almost unacquainted, but I did not detect any leading spirit among them.

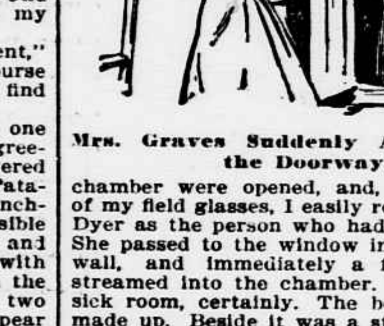
On the whole I regarded Mrs. Dyer as the best of the lot, and the easiest to deal with in such efforts as I might make to solve the mystery. I resolved to have a word with her before leaving the house, and, therefore, I clung to the veranda more tightly than the vines that encircled its ancient pillars while Mrs. Graves strove to lop me off with the cold edge of inhospitality.

Mrs. Dyer and "the doctor" seemed surprised that I had shown so much tenacity, when they at last descended from the western chamber where they had presumably been busy with the sick man. I ventured to inquire about my friend's health, and was assured by the young man that a favorable termination of the case might be looked for "in a few weeks;" whereupon Mrs. Graves nodded her head at me as much as to say: "I'll get rid of you long before that, my boy."

Apparent acquiescence seemed to be my best course, and I made my adieux with so great a semblance of sincerity that the hatchet-faced old woman was deceived. She took "the doctor" into the house again, ostensibly to offer him some refreshment, and thus I was left alone with Mrs. Dyer, which was what I had wished for. Immediately I began to speak of her husband as if I had no hope of ever seeing him alive again. I dilated upon his many amiable qualities and upon the brilliancy of his genius, judging that if she had really been led into any plot against him, her affection for him—the sincerity of which I had never doubted—would be stirred to such a degree that she would betray signs of remorse. To my great satisfaction, she began to cry; and thus I knew that, though Bertram's case might be desperate, there was one, at least, of his persecutors who had not entered into the plot with her whole heart. My mouth was open to begin a plea that she should trust me as a friend and tell me all, when Mrs. Graves suddenly appeared in the doorway. The glance which she leveled at me was like one of the tomahawks that flashed in Bertram's first great story, and I fled for my life.

Of course, I had not abandoned the adventure. It was a retreat in the nature of a feint, designed to raise false hopes in the heart of the enemy. No sooner had I passed out of Dyer's Farm, by the Greenville gate, than I wheeled to the westward, following a road that passed close to the base of a steep, wooded hill that I had noticed from the veranda. Its top was less than half a mile from the house, and I believed that it would afford me an excellent point of observation.

Concealing my bicycle among the trees, I climbed the hill, and speedily found a spot from which I could look out upon my friend's abode without danger of being seen. As I turned my eyes upon it, the blinds outside the windows of the western



Mrs. Graves Suddenly Appeared in the Doorway.

chamber were opened, and, with the aid of my field glasses, I easily recognized Mrs. Dyer as the person who had opened them. She passed to the window in the southern wall, and immediately a flood of light streamed into the chamber. It was not a sick room, certainly. The bed was neatly made up. Beside it was a stand on which were several books and magazines, but no phials or other detestable appurtenances of disease.

There was no one else in the room but Mrs. Dyer, so far as I could see. Certainly no invalid would have been exposed to such a draft of crisp autumn air as must have been surging through the apartment.

This discovery strengthened a suspicion which I had previously formed that Dyer was really in a room on the ground floor. I observed that the whole north end of the house seemed closed. It was from a room in that part of the dwelling that the young man had come on the preceding night. Had he been watching with an invalid, or guarding a prisoner? I resolved to solve the problem before another night had passed.

It may seem strange that, among my theories, I did not consider the possibility that Dyer was purposely avoiding me. In explanation I can say only that my theories were based upon my knowledge of the man. He was not one to hide from friend or foe. I believed that if left to his own choice he would receive me with the heartiest cordiality. It was impossible that my intercession on behalf of his cousin had offended him to such a degree that he did not wish to see me.

I remained all day among the hills, observing the house from different points. Hunger drove me to a farm house in the afternoon. It was as poor an abode as ever I saw in the country, but full of good will. The farmer's wife lamented heartily that she could give me no better entertainment, but tomorrow was her "baking day," and "everything was clean eat up." There was no cooked food in the house except a pumpkin pie baked in a yellow, earthen ware dish, three inches deep. This she set before me with a pitcher of milk, and I made a meal of them. The pie was somber with molasses, which imparted an acidity to it that was not unpleasant at first, but it grew upon me in succeeding hours. I think the pangs of remorse must be something like that, when one has really sinned. However, one cannot cure remorse with bicarbonate of soda. I rode ten miles to Rockwood for this useful drug, and incidentally obtained from the apothecary some bits of information about Bertram Dyer.

"He used to come over here quite some, when he and his folks fust moved into the old Peters place," said the druggist, "but lately I ain't seen nothing of him. I guess he's trading with somebody over Greenville way. His folks buy their groceries over there. I heerd awhile ago that he was sick, but I ain't sold any medicine to him lately, and I guess maybe he's better. Be you going up that way?"

Possibly. Would I be coming back by way of Rockwood? If so, would I drop in? Rockwood folks would be glad to hear how Mr. Dyer was getting along. Some of them had read one of his books, and they thought it pretty good for a young man to write. They were in hopes he would write something about Rockwood, and kind of help the place along. I promised to suggest a local story to the distinguished author, if I had the pleasure of meeting him.

It was about 10 o'clock when I arrived once more upon the outskirts of the "old Peters place." I had resolved to pass the night in its vicinity; and to commit a friendly burglary if my investigations should convince me that Bertram was the prisoner of his wife's relations.

At first the moon was too high for my purpose, but before midnight it had dropped nearly to the hills, and some light clouds obscured it. Then I stealthily approached the house, and was soon concealed in the shadow of the northern wall. A very faint light escaped through a cur-

I Pushed Aside the Curtain.

tained and shuttered window of the room which I had most in mind. I crouched beneath that window and listened. At first all was still; then I became aware of sounds that made me shudder. Some one within was groaning, not loudly, as if with violent pain, but rather, as it seemed to me, with wrath. Sometimes I could hear the rumbling of words that sounded like oaths. Again I heard a rustling as of paper. Finally some one cried: "There! —it!" with tremendous emphasis. The voice sounded unlike Dyer's, yet I could not be sure. Presently the light went out. I caught the faint sound of a closing door. Then all was still.

I waited fifteen minutes, according to my best judgment, but it might not have been so long. Then I tried the fastening of the window, having softly opened the blinds. It seemed to be secure, but at last I forced the catch, and raised the lower sash. The pulley squealed painfully, but it aroused no one. Having paused to make sure of that, I pushed aside the curtain and thrust in my head. The room was totally dark. I climbed in cautiously and stood for a moment listening in the gloom. Faint noises in the old house counterfeited footfalls, and I would have said that I was not alone but for the aimlessness with which the patterings ran across the room and stopped and ran again.

At last I ventured to light a match. The flame revealed a large, square room, fitted up like a study, with an abundance of fine old furniture. A well-filled book case covered nearly all one wall. Close to my right hand was a great antique desk, open and strewn with typewritten sheets. Bending over them, I recognized Dyer's hand in various corrections.

The match burned my fingers. I threw it down and lighted another, with the flame of which I kindled a lamp that stood upon the desk. Then I perceived in the midst of the typewritten sheets a brief manuscript letter addressed to myself. It expressed very mild regret for having missed seeing me, and the hope that I would come again "next summer." I laughed softly at the impatience of the writer to see me. He asked that I would write to him, but I must not say anything more about Emily. Especially I must write if ever I contemplated coming to the Berkshires again. The style was forced; the penmanship was labored. The letter had "come hard." It had plainly been written at dictation and under compulsion. No wonder Dyer had sworn when he had finished it.

Evidently the poor fellow was not at all his own master in that house. I resolved anew to see him and to rescue him. Where could he be? Where but in that other room on the north end of the house, the room that I had seen no one enter or leave on the preceding day?

There was a door between the rooms. I turned the knob. It was locked on the other side. I ventured to call, softly: "Bertram!" A confused murmur—a painful, smothered sound—was audible within. I called again, as loudly as I dared. Still the same murmuring noise, a little louder than before. Had they tied the poor fellow like a dog and gagged him? I put my strength upon the door, softly, steadily. The lock yielded. I entered.

The room was dark, but a light suddenly flashed up. I saw a tumbled bed, a flaring lamp on a table; and, beyond, Grandfather Graves in his scanty night clothing, just in the act of taking down an enormous old-fashioned musket from the wall.

Bertram Dyer was not there, and a half second later neither was I. My form might have been seen flitting across the lawn, while behind me, and, indeed, all around me, echoed the resounding bang of the old musket.

PART III.
THE TREATY OF DYER'S FARM.

I passed the remainder of the night in a barn belonging to one of Dyer's neighbors, for it seemed unwise to remain upon his estate. Grandfather Graves was evidently a man of action despite his advanced years, and I had no desire to encounter him again, except upon the most conventional terms. His musket shot must have aroused the household; indeed, from a lurking place among the trees I saw lights flash at many of the windows, but there was no indication that a search was being made for me outside the house. Whether he had recognized me, or had mistaken me for a burglar of the ordinary sort, was a matter to which I devoted considerable thought, without reaching any conclusion, as I lay upon my scented couch of hay in the hospitable barn.

I breakfasted at a farm house, and then set out upon another reconnaissance in the direction of my friend's abode. It was my hope to encounter Mrs. Dyer at such a distance from the house as would enable me to talk with her unmolested by her formidable mother or the prompt and irascible Grandfather Graves. I thought it probable that the events of the last twenty-four hours might have shaken her allegiance to the Graves faction so much that she might be willing to abandon whatever enterprise was on foot.

With this purpose in view I approached the "old Peters place" in as secret a manner as possible, choosing a course that led through a thick grove of spruce and fir trees whose green wall completely shut off the house from observation on the north. I had forced my way about 200 yards through this thicket when I became aware of a little clearing in the midst of it. The sun had climbed up so high that its rays struck through the tops of the trees and glinted upon something white in the open; and it was this which first attracted my attention. Immediately I perceived that the clearing was a burial ground, and I remembered that the Peters family, which for a century or more had inhabited the estate, had been so far from a village that they would hardly have borne their dead to a churchyard. It is not uncommon in rural New England to see the monuments of the dead almost under the windows of the living. Usually they are not placed in so retired a spot upon the estate as was here the case, but can be seen from the traveled road.

The flash of the white stone attracted me sufficiently to make me turn aside from my way toward the small cemetery. It was the last place where I should have feared discovery; and, therefore, my surprise was great when, upon forcing my way between two masses of green boughs, I suddenly perceived a woman standing beside one of the graves. In a moment I recognized Mrs. Dyer. She held some flowers in her hands—I had noticed that

In a Moment I Recognized Mrs. Dyer.

she cultivated a great many in the house—and as I watched her, she bent down and placed her offering carefully upon the low mound at her feet. Then she knelt down for a moment. Instinctively I bowed my head; and when I raised my eyes again she was just slipping away into the grove on the other side of the clearing.

So great was my surprise at this encounter that, though it was just what I had wished for, I failed to take advantage of it. She was gone before I could command my voice and call to her.

Yet I had learned all that I could wish to know. A strong wave of grief passed over me. So genuine was my sorrow that I took no note of the strange complications and contradictions that were involved in the discovery I had made.

With uncovered head I approached the mound beside which she had knelt. A small and plain slab was erected there. It had suffered much from the weather, and that surprised me, but not nearly so much as did the inscription which I saw upon the stone:

Sacred to the Memory of
ELIPHALET C. PETERS,
Who Departed This Life January the
Third, Eighteen Hundred and Eleven.
After a Long and Painful Sickness Which
He Bore with Christian Fortitude,
He Entered Into Rest, and Is Now Enjoying the Beautitude of Heaven (as
We Trust).

It seemed as if I must be still asleep in the old barn and dreaming fantastic nonsense. Why should Mrs. Dyer come in the early morning to lay flowers upon the grave of Eliphalet C. Peters, who had flourished principally in the preceding century? It was inconceivable. Her conduct required a rational explanation, and was susceptible of it. I put on my hat and hurried toward the house.

There seemed to be no longer any need of concealment, and so I aproached the front door boldly. Mrs. Dyer was on the veranda with her mother and Grandfather Graves. They all sprang up at sight of me, and I thought that the younger woman was going to run away, but, sustained by the presence of the others, she remained. I bade them all good morning as courteously as I could.

"Well?" cried Mrs. Graves, sharply. "Out with it. What do you know?"

"I know that Bertram is dead," said I, "and that you stole a headstone in order that it might help you to tell a lie."

"No, no; not quite so bad as that," said Grandfather Graves. "We didn't rob anybody, dead or alive. I found Eliphalet Peters' tombstone up in the loft over the woodshed, and I know all about it. The stone was ordered when Eliphalet was sick, but he disappointed his relations and got well. The story has been handed down. Peters died, and was buried somewhere else."

"Mother," sobbed Mrs. Dyer, "tell him why we did this wicked thing."

"I suppose I must," responded Mrs. Graves; "but I wish he'd minded his own business. The fact is that we did what any sensible folks would have done, and what Bertram told us to do. He knew that he hadn't long to live when he moved up here. He had some kind of heart trouble. But he had made a great name, and he didn't

The Inscription Surprised Me.

want it to be wasted. Anything with his name on it would sell, and so he wrote all he could, and used up a good deal of old stuff that nobody would buy before he got to be famous."

"All recognized geniuses do that," said I.

"Well, he died," continued Mrs. Graves, "and there we were. It came upon us very suddenly."

"We had hoped he might pull through," said Grandfather Graves.

"Did he have any literary assistance before—before he died?" I asked.

"No," responded Mrs. Graves. "He was always saying that he would find some one, but he never did. When the poor, dear boy was gone we buried him in the Peters cemetery. But we couldn't let his name perish with him. I appeal to you, sir; could we?"

"Remember that he had a very large family," said Grandfather Graves.

"It was a trying situation," I admitted. "What did you do?"

"We sent for my nephew Clarence," replied Mrs. Graves.

"He is the young man who personated the Greenville doctor, I suppose?" said I.

"Yes; that was Clarence," Mrs. Graves responded. "He was working in a machine shop in Boston before he came up here. I didn't know how he would do, but there was nobody else in the family whom we could trust. Clarence had had a good education, and I remembered that he had tried to get work on a newspaper at one time. Then, too, Bertram had once had a letter from him, and he said it was a masterpiece."

"He wanted to borrow a hundred dollars," said Grandfather Graves.

"We got him up here as soon as we could," the lady continued, without noticing the interruption, "and I've been paying him $25 a week ever since. He's written a power of stories in the last nine months. He took naturally to Bertram's handwriting, and besides we got him a typewriter, which has helped him a good deal."

At this moment I heard a peculiarly hollow and mournful groan. Turning quickly I perceived Clarence Graves, who had softly stepped out upon the veranda. His hair was in that disorder which seemed natural to it, and I observed that a spot upon the right side of his head was nearly bald. As my eye rested upon the spot, he rubbed it with a despairing gesture that seemed to be habitual with him.

"I wish you'd left me in Boston," he cried out to Mrs. Graves. "I wish I was working in a machine shop at a dollar a day. What had I done that the Lord should make a writer out of me?"

"Tell me, my young friend," said I, "was it you whom I heard groaning in the north room last night?"

"Of course it was," he answered. "Do I ever do anything else but groan? I was just finishing a story. But what's the use? One's no sooner done than another's begun."

"It is the curse of literature," said I. "By the way, that was a clever letter you wrote to me."

"Oh, that was nothing," he rejoined. "Forgery is easy enough, and it don't lie on my conscience. But stories—"

He ended the sentence with a groan.

"And now you know all," said Mrs. Graves.

"Oh, please don't tell on us!" cried Mrs. Dyer.

"If you do we shall all go to the poor house," added Grandfather Graves.

"Do not be alarmed," I hastened to say. "Far be it from me to interfere with your commercial arrangements. As I am in the business myself, it would be distinctly unprofessional. Otherwise, the case has no moral aspect. I have never held it wrong to deceive the public, and to cheat a publisher is a virtue. I shall simply recommend some additional precautions, and then I shall say no more on that matter. But there is a point upon which I must insist. Miss Emily Dyer is a most deserving young woman, and——"

"You would recommend an allowance, I suppose?" said Mrs. Graves.

"Shall we say $50 a week?" I suggested.

Grandfather Graves groaned and Mrs. Graves protested, but what was the use? I had them in my power. The contract was drawn up and signed. I call it the treaty of Dyer's farm. There is a stipulation that an affectionate letter shall accompany each remittance; and I may say here that the terms of the agreement are being faithfully fulfilled. Emily, of course, is not in the secret. Indeed, she knows nothing of my connection with her good fortune. She will marry the lanky young artist soon, and may Providence make him worthy of her.

I have not visited the farm again, but I keep an eye on current fiction, and Bertram Dyer's name continues to hold its place. Some of his stories strike me as a bit mechanical, but perhaps if I did not know that Clarence had worked in a machine shop I should not remark it. After all, criticism is so much affected by a knowledge of a writer's personality! It is very unfortunate that writers are not known simply by numbers. Their portraits and biographies might be kept at headquarters, but they oughtn't to get into public prints. That is an offense to Art, which I always write with a capital letter.

The Leading Liar.

From the Cincinnati Enquirer.

After the dog liar, the smart baby liar and the horse liar had their turns, the common, ordinary liar said:

"Well, you fellows own some pretty bright live stock, but I don't think any of them compare with my educated katydid."

"What does it do?" asked the man with the dog that knew the time of day.

"My wife's sister is a schoolma'am, and has taught the insect to say 'Kathryn did.'"

A Fortune Waiting.

From Exchange.

There is a fortune for the milliner who shall devise a bonnet that can be worn in any part of the church and always present the trimmed side to the congregation.

Living in Hope.

From the Bay City Chat.

"I haven't had a ride in a carriage I don't know when," complained Mrs. Jaysmith."

"Never mind," replied her husband. "Just have patience. Some of the neighbors will have a funeral one of these days."

Something to Do With the Bar.

From the Cleveland Plain-Dealer.

"Now, you wouldn't believe, to look at him, that that man was a judge, would you?"

"I don't know as I'd pick him out for a judge, but a glance at his nose would be sufficient to convince me that he had something to do with the bar."

Lack of Confidence.

From the Cleveland Plain-Dealer.

"Then you won't lend me a dime?"

The voice was full of pathos and huskiness.

The other man shook his head.

"What this country is just a-starvin' for is return of confidence," said the first man as he sadly moved away.

Purely Mental.

From Puck.

"I am told that he has some mental affection."

"Yes; he is in love with Miss Blunose of Boston."

CATCHING RIFLE BULLETS

Explanation of a Sensational Exhibition Made by Herrmann.

A Squad of Soldiers Apparently Fires a Deadly Charge, but the Magician Escapes Unharmed.

The public at large, as well as people who are experts at legerdemain, universally acknowledge that "the shooting trick" is the most sensational and the most wonderful of any of the performances given by our modern magicians. It is equaled only by some of the marvelous tricks of the Indian fakirs.

Two years ago Prof. A. Herrmann did it for the first time in this country in the Metropolitan Opera House in New York. It was on the occasion of an entertainment for charity. The vast auditorium was crowded to the doors. The shooting was to close the evening's entertainment. When the time came, six soldiers from the United States troops, stationed at Governor's Island, were marched on the stage under command of a sergeant. The soldiers had been selected that afternoon by the commandant of the post. They were the crack marksmen of the battalion. Herrmann had never seen them or held any communication with them. He did not even know their names. Following the soldiers came a committee of three prominent New Yorkers and a surgeon, who stood in the wings. Nobody else was on the stage but Herrmann. The firing party was drawn up in line. Herrmann passed along the line, looking through the barrel of each man's rifle to see that there was no cartridge in it. Then he retired to one side.

The sergeant took six regulation United States army rifle cartridges, with fixed balls, from his pouch and placed them on a salver handed to him from the wings. These he then passed to the committee for examination. After the committee was satisfied that the cartridges were what they purported to be, the sergeant went among the audience and allowed any one who pleased to examine them and put identification marks on the bullets. At least fifty people inspected them. When all were satisfied of the genuineness of the deadly missiles he returned to the stage, gave a cartridge to each soldier, and uttered the command "Load!" The locks clicked, the rifles were brought to a "carry," and the squad was marched down on an improvised platform over the heads of the audience about twenty feet from the stage. They faced about and were ready for the volley, three kneeling and three standing.

The Critical Moment.

Meanwhile Herrmann had stepped to the wings and taken from a table there a china plate. This he placed on the stage floor at his feet. Then he braced himself as though to meet a shock and held his hands, palms out, in front of his chest.

"I am ready," he said, in a voice hardly above a whisper.

As he stood there, his pale face set and his black eyes looking into the muzzles of the six loaded muskets, the audience gave one mighty gasp and held its breath.

"Fire!" commanded the sergeant.

There was a crash, a sheet of flame, and through the wreath of blue powder smoke Herrmann could be seen bending over and dropping the bullets upon the plate. Some women had screamed, others had fainted. Then came a tumult of cheers. Herrmann was unhurt except for some burns on his fingers made by the hot bullets. Yes, they were the same bullets. They were positively identified by the people who had marked them.

It was very thrilling, but it was all theatrical effect. As a matter of fact, Herrmann was not in danger for one second, and no bullets were fired at him. He himself has never explained the trick, but from an authoritative inside source it is possible to tell exactly how it is done.

The sergeant is a confederate. The soldiers are not, and are as much surprised as anybody that their shots do not take effect. The sergeant is the man who really performs the trick, although he has very little to do. So simple is it that he requires no rehearsal, and is not even told what to do until he comes to the theater with his men. Ten dollars is liberal pay for what he does.

Several days before the performance Herrmann secures six ball cartridges exactly like those to be given the sergeant for use in the performance. He extracts the balls from these cartridges and substitutes in their place bullets made of a composition of mercury and black lead. This composition can be molded into any shape, and when placed in the shell looks exactly like a genuine leaden bullet. The mercury is so heavy that the weight of the fake cartridge is also the same as the real article. The soldiers in handling them cannot detect the difference without feeling of the bullet end of the cartridge, and that they have no opportunity to do. When fired the mercury and plumbago fly into dust and do no harm. It cannot even be felt a few feet away from the muzzles.

A Trick Salver.

The next thing the trickster does is to prepare a trick salver. All that's required is a salver with a double bottom worked by a button underneath. This is a very simple device, used by all magicians. It is as common in sleight-of-hand work as trick tumblers or trick eggs.

With these "props" and an intelligent sergeant the magician is all ready to be shot at.

When the sergeant places the real cartridges on the salver and passes them to the committee and the audience to examine, the fake cartridges are already in it, concealed in the false bottom. Of course it is the real cartridges that are examined and marked. As he walks back from the audience to the stage he holds the salver at arm's length, with a hand grasping it on each side to show that he is not touching the cartridges or trying to change them. His fingers are under the salver and his thumbs bent over its edge. With one of his fingers he gives the button a gentle touch. Presto! the button changes. The fake cartridges come on top, the real ones go out of sight underneath. He quickly hands out these fake cartridges to the men one by one and gives the command to load. Before any one has had a chance to examine them they are in the guns and safe from prying eyes.

Where the Bullets Come From.

The sergeant then walks to the wings to put down the seemingly empty salver on a table just out of sight. Hid behind this table is the magician's assistant. As soon as the salver is put down he touches the spring and brings the real cartridges up. With a pair of pincers he rapidly pulls the bullets out of the shells and drops them into a hot dish. He has time to do all this easily enough while the soldiers are being marched down to the platform and faced about.

Then Herrmann comes to the wings to get the plate on which to drop the bullets. But before he picks up the plate he gathers in the bullets, which by this time have become slightly heated, and palms them between his fingers or up his sleeves. Then knowing that the only bullets on the stage are in his possession he can face the rifles without fear and drop the marked leaden balls on the plate as soon as the volley is fired.

Simple, isn't it? And yet of such material are marvels made.

The only danger that Herrmann runs is the chance that one of the soldiers may be a crank and have an extra cartridge with him and fire it. In that case the trick would probably turn out a tragedy. It is on that account that Herrmann insists on looking through the barrels of the guns after the soldiers march on. As the men are at "attention" all the while afterward, there would be no opportunity for one of them to surreptitiously load his piece. The loading is done while the soldiers are in line facing the audience and the sergeant. Each man holds up the cartridge given him, and at the command "load," inserts it in the chamber in plain sight of all. No time or chance is allowed for a substitution.

Good Advice.

From Life.

"I shouldn't advise you to leave Jack for very long, dear. Some husbands, you know, are like return tickets."

"Why, ma! What do you mean?"

"They are forfeited if detached."

Natural Result.

From Tid-Bits.

He—"This tune seems to haunt me."

She—"Because you have murdered it so often."

FREE BOOKS AND LUNCHES.

Public School Features Which in Mrs. Stowell's Opinion Are Desirable.

Louise Reed Stowell in School Board Journal.

The American people are more interested today in having every child benefited by its schools than it is in having the character of the schools improved. Not how high shall we take our schools, nor how broad shall we make our courses of instruction; but, how may every child be reached, and how may every child be made a safer and better member of the community, is the school problem of the day. Any movement reaching down and uplifting gives strength to the school system, and the taxpayer receives his compensation.

The sooner we come to look upon the intellectual and moral training of every child, of every human soul, as the highest political wisdom, and the imperative duty of the state, the better will be the individual happiness and the public security.

A liberal education for every child should be for ever the ideal of the teacher, the board of education, and the legislator.

The responsibility rests with the board of education to make our public schools free. They should be free public schools in every respect. They should be free school buildings, free furniture, free apparatus, free fuel, free ink, free copy books, free slates and pencils, free stationery, free instruction, free text books, and also—what I would like to see—free lunches.

The public schools must give this free education. Free public schools were established for this very purpose. For this every barrier excluding any deserving pupil should be broken down and swept away. The cost of text books is such a barrier in many states. The cost of noon lunches is such a barrier in all of our large cities.

The American system of free schools was established over two hundred and fifty years ago. When one of the states ordained that every town of one hundred householders should maintain a school in which youth could be fitted for the university. The same state established the first free high school, the first free normal school, the first free art school, and the first free school library in every district.

Those states and cities which have not adopted the free text book system and provided every child within its limits with school books, stationery, slates and pencils, materials for drawing, mechanical work and all that the child needs in the school room are behind in the onward movement of progress.

This system should be extended to every high school as well as to the grammar schools. This should include every high school whether business, mechanical, or literary, in the country. And every normal school as well as high school.

Communities which have tried this free text book system are perfectly satisfied with the results and would not be willing to return to the old plan.

The policy of furnishing free text books to the children is winning its way fast and is certain to be universal in America.

The following states have adopted free text books, while many others have partly done so: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Nebraska, Idaho, and the cities of Baltimore, Brooklyn, Detroit, New York and Philadelphia.

There are two extremely progressive movements which, could they be adopted, and there is no reason why they should not, would make our public school system ideal. The first of these is, in my belief, of very great importance. The furnishing of free, wholesome, hot lunches to every child in school at the hour of the noon meal. In those schools of our large cities, which are so situated as to be filled with the children of extremely poor families, it is as much a duty to furnish to the children something to eat as it is a duty to furnish them something to study. Still, whether in the rural districts or in the crowded cities, I believe it is the duty of the boards of education to see that wherever children have to bring their lunch to school, they should be supplied with something warm and wholesome to eat, and that free of expense to the family. This movement would fill our high and grammar schools to overflowing.

I would also like to see all school books given to each individual child to hold and to keep as his own property, not only so long as he comes to school, but always. It would train this child in property rights. It would be a constant source of education to the child's parents—and in many cases they would be the only books the father and mother can have to read. It would be an education to the family.

He Struck Another Match.

From Short Stories

Bishop Wilmer of Alabama, famous as a story teller, says that one of his friends lost a dearly beloved wife, and in his sorrow caused these words to be inscribed on her tombstone: "The light of mine eyes has gone out." The bereaved married within a year. Shortly afterward the bishop was walking through the graveyard with another gentleman. When they arrived at the tomb, the latter asked the bishop what he would say of the present state of affairs, in view of the words on the tombstone. "I think," said the bishop, "the words 'But I have struck another match' should be added."

Solid for McKinley.

From the Boston Herald.

"What is your name?" asked his honor in the naturalization court in Chicago.

"McKinley," replied the Italian.

"Can you read or write the English language," asked the court.

"McKinley," answered the Italian.

"If you can neither read nor write, how do you expect to vote?" persisted the court.

"McKinley," replied the Italian.

And yet he was given his papers.

A Dry Calling.

From Punch.

"Th' ole 'squire stop an' spoke to me this marnin'; an' Oi ast 'im 'ow Master Philip was gettin' on in Lunnon. 'Oh,' says 'e, ''e's bin called to the bar.' Oi dunno wot 'e meant, so Oi didn' say nothin'; but Oi says to meself, 'Ah,' Oi says, 'from what Oi remember of 'm, 'e didn' want no callin'!"